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Menlo Innovations expanding into Kerrytown Market space

Software developer plans to double in size

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Rich Sheridan thinks a new age of innovation has dawned, and he wants his fast-growing software development company to be a leader.

The five-year-old Menlo Innovations is moving into the third floor of Kerrytown Market and Shops, quadrupling its space in anticipation of more growth, Sheridan announced Wednesday at a reception with clients, city officials and company employees.

The company will move into the space in September.

"Our base business has been expanding. We've seen a fairly sizable expansion year over year," said Sheridan, whose company has revenues between \$2 million and \$3 million. "We're very crowded in right now. This will give us room to expand our existing business as well as a sizable presence to expand."

The company has 15 full-time and 30 contract employees working out of an office at 212 N. Fourth St.

Celebrating its five-year anniversary Wednesday, Menlo has moved beyond the start-up phase and is moving into the growth phase of its business, through partnerships and acquisitions.

Last August, Menlo acquired Ann Arbor-based English Communications Services. ECS has developed software, CD-ROMs and individual training curriculum to assist non-native English speakers decrease their accents, which are often a barrier to communication.

Judy Ravin, the chief executive officer and founder of ECS, joined Menlo to form the Accent Reduction Institute. Ravin developed a CD-ROM and an audio guide to help students practice anywhere they can turn on a laptop computer.

Ravin said the move to the new building is just in time as her faculty is about to double and the current building couldn't handle it.

Menlo works with technology start-ups to develop software to analyze, sort or view data.

"Our near-term plans are to double the size of our base business of software design and development," he said. "That will ultimately necessitate the doubling of our staff."

Lisamarie Babik, the "software factory floor manager," said Menlo will often turn away customers who already know what they need done.

"Sometimes what we develop isn't what they expected at all," she said.

The new space for Menlo will be a mix of ultra-high-tech and old brick.

Sheridan, who based his company's name after Menlo Park, N.J., where Thomas Edison did most of his work, wanted to have a building built at time when Edison was working and the space fit the bill.

He said he also likes that Kerrytown is filled with locally-owned businesses like his.

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